

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OUAGAD 02542 200937Z

17

ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2125

INFO AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, EAID

SUBJ: PAN AFRICAN AIR INDUSTRIES

REF: STATE 17444

1. ON AUGUST 17, THOMAS ROBERTSON, PRESIDENT OF PAN AFRICAN AIR INDUSTRIES (PAAI) SIGNED CONVENTION WITH COUV BY WHICH PAAI UNDERTAKES TO INVEST 50 MILLION DOLLARS IN UPPER VOLTA OVER NEXT FIVE YEARS. GOUV WILL GUARANTEE 30 PER CENT OF LOANS CONTRACTED BY PAAI FOR THESE INVESTMENTS. PURPOSE OF CONVENTION IS TO PROMOTE EXPORT OF ANIMAL AND VEGETABLE PRODUCTS, ORGANIZE TRANSPORT LINKS NECESSARY FOR EXPORT OPERATIONS, AND ASSIST IN DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION FOR EXPORT. FOR GOUV, CONVENTION WAS SIGNED BY MINISTER OF PLAN BOUBACAR AND MINISTER OF FINANCE KALMOGOT AND WAS COUNTERSIGNED BY PRESIDENT LAMIZANA HIMSELF. TO IMPLEMENT THIS CONVENTION, FOUR SEPARATE PROTOCOLS ARE TO BE SIGNED IN NEAR FUTURE BY PAAI ON ONE HAND

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PAGE 02 OUAGAD 02542 200937Z

AND MINISTRIES OF FINANCE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, COMMERCE,

AND TRANSPORT ON THE OTHER.

2. IN LETTER TO THE EMBASSY ENCLOSING COPY OF CONVENTION, ROBERTSON STATES THAT PAAI OFFICE HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY OPENED IN OUAGADOUGOU AND THAT SOUMANA TRAORE, PRESENTLY DIRECTOR OF SOCIETE AFRICAINE D' ETUDES ET DE DEVELOPPEMENT (SAED), HAS BEEN NAMED DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR AFRICAN OPERATIONS. NEXT WEEK, AN AMERICAN GENERAL MANAGER AND THREE OTHER AMERICANS WILL ARRIVE IN OUAGADOUGOU TO BEGIN OPERATIONS.

3. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS, ROBERTSON STATED THAT HE HOPED TO BEGIN OPERATIONS IN OCTOBER WITH THREE OR FOUR AIRCRAFT. INITIAL EXPORT OPERATIONS WILL BE BASED ON CURRENT VOLTAN PRODUCTION OF VEGETABLES BUT THIS PRODUCTION ACCORDING TO ROBERTSON, WILL HAVE TO BE DRASTICALLY INCREASED OVER NEXT FEW MONTHS AND PAAI HAS UNDERTAKEN TO PROVIDE 280,000 DOLLARS WORTH OF SEEDS, FERTILIZER AND PESTICIDES. SINCE TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE, THESE PRODUCTS WILL HAVE TO COME BY AIR FROM EUROPE, AND ROBERTSON SAID THAT, AS LAST RESORT, HE MAY HAVE TO "ASK THE U.S. AIR FORCE TO FLY THEM IN".

4. WE FRANKLY DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO THINK OF THIS DEVELOPMENT. THERE IS NO DENYING ROBERTSON'S ENTHUSIASM, ENERGY, RESOURCEFULNESS, AND HIS ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE HIS CONFIDENCE TO OTHER PEOPLE. OVER PAST SIX WEEKS HE HAS GONE EVERYWHERE AND HAS SEEN EVERYBODY. WHILE HE AND HIS PEOPLE HAVE HAD MANY CONTACTS WITH EMBASSY AND AID OFFICERS, THESE CONTACTS WERE DESIGNED TO ELICIT INFORMATION AND NOT TO REQUEST ASSISTANCE. WHATEVER HE HAS DONE, HE HAS DONE ON HIS OWN, AND GETTING THIS CONVENTION OUT OF GOUV IN LESS THAN TWO MONTHS IS SOMETHING OF A MIRACLE. WE MUST ASSUME THAT ANTOINE YAMEGO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF IMF, HAD DONE A GOOD JOB IN PREPARING THE GROUND WORK. ON THE OTHER HAND, ROBERTSON CONTINUES TO BE EXTREMELY VAGUE ABOUT HIS SOURCES OF FINANCING AND HOW HE WILL SET UP THE KIND OF INFRASTRUCTURE NECESSARY FOR THIS HUGE OPERATION. HE CLAIMS THAT WHATEVER EXPERTISE WILL BE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 OUAGAD 02542 200937Z

NECESSARY TO SET UP THIS OPERATION IS ALREADY AVAILABLE TO PAAI.

5. IN OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH THE VARIOUS VOLTAN MINISTERS INVOLVED, WE HAVE TRIED TO INTRODUCE A NOTE OF CAUTION. THE AMBASSADOR RECENTLY TOLD FINANCE MISTER KALMOGO THAT PAAI WAS A NEW ORGANIZATION AND THAT WE KNEW VERY LITTLE ABOUT IT. HIS REPLY WAS THAT GOUV HAD RECEIVED ALL INFORMATION IT NEEDED ON PAAI FROM ANTOINE

YAMEOGO, BOTH KALMOGO AND MINISTER OF RURAL
DEVELOPMENT SALIA SANON ARE PARTICULARLY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT
THIS PROJECT. WE HOPE THEY WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.
GRAHAM

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